

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A magnetic tape unit to which a cartridge accommodating a magnetic tape is detachably attached and which accesses the magnetic tape in accordance with an access request from a host, wherein

the cartridge accommodates the magnetic tape and includes a cartridge memory which stores information in a nonvolatile and rewritable manner,

the magnetic tape unit comprising:

a magnetic tape drive which accesses the magnetic tape;

a memory read/writer for accessing the cartridge memory;

and

an access-controlling section which allows the cartridge memory to store management information of a plurality of volumes using the memory read/writer, and in which based on the management information, a LOAD command of the cartridge from the host is replaced by a command for accessing a region corresponding to a volume of a virtual cartridge which receives the LOAD command from the host in the magnetic tape accommodated in an actual cartridge loaded in this magnetic tape unit, the access-controlling section allowing the magnetic tape drive to access the magnetic tape accommodated in the actual cartridge.

2. The magnetic tape unit according to claim 1, wherein the access-controlling section remains a state in which the magnetic tape is loaded in the actual cartridge in accordance

with an UNLOAD command of the cartridge from the host, and the access-controlling section brings this state into a state in which the actual cartridge can be taken out in accordance with an EJECT command from the host.

3. The magnetic tape unit according to claim 1, wherein the access-controlling section remains a state in which the magnetic tape is loaded in the actual cartridge until the number of UNLOAD commands from the host reaches a predetermined value, and the access-controlling section brings this state into a state in which the actual cartridge can be taken out if the number of UNLOAD commands from the host reaches the predetermined value.